

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning and Skills, and
Community, Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 20th June 2022

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director Community and
Environment

PORTFOLIO: Employment, Learning and Skills and
Community

SUBJECT: Sport and Recreation Team

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide members with a report on the Council's Sport and Recreation Service. Reporting on the Leisure Centre Service and Sports Development for the Financial Year 21/22

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) **The report be noted**
- ii) **That the board note the presentation and welcomes the progress being made in encouraging and supporting residents to be Active**
- iii) **Members comment on the service delivery**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The report provides information on how and what the service has delivered during the last 12 months. Emerging from the pandemic has been extremely difficult time for staff, regular customers and engagement with residents. Activities are an essential component in supporting and developing the infrastructure of the community, to improve the quality of life both physically and mentally.

3.2 The leisure centre service reopened on the 12th April 2021, following the third national lockdown. The service actively works with partner organisations, such as, Halton Sports Partnership, Cheshire Police in order to facilitate development through a better understanding of local issues and a sharing of resources to achieve success. Without the contribution from our staff and partners, much of the work highlighted within this report would not have been possible.

4.0 SPORT AND RECREATION TEAM

4.1 The team has two distinct areas:

- Sports Development Team – development of programmes and activities to support the local infrastructure and encourage residents to start and stay active. Including day-to-day operations at Frank Myler Pavilion and facilitating grass sport pitch use.
- Management of the Councils 3 Leisure Centres. Kingsway Leisure Centre, Brookvale Recreation Centre and Runcorn Swimming Pool.

The Sports Development Team is a small team and during 2020 and into 2021 posts remained vacant, delivering a saving to the Council. Recruitment is now complete and there are 3 full time Officers, a part time Community Sports Coach and 2 part time assistants to support Frank Myler Pavilion operations.

The Leisure Services Team has 52 contracted posts occupied, 25 casual workers supporting service delivery and a significant number of vacant posts. Post pandemic recruitment across the Liverpool City Region has been challenging. Restrictions meant fewer training courses, resulting in a National shortage, specifically, lifeguards and swimming instructors. The service does experience a high turnover of staff. Young people historically fill the casual worker roles, such as Leisure Attendants, whilst they are in higher education and university. Swim England and the RLSS are working with local authorities to develop Workforce plans, to attract and retain people.

The following is a snap shot of local projects delivered.

5.0 **SPORTS DEVELOPMENT DELIVERY 2020/21**

5.1 **Key Outcome: Increase Participation and Widen Access**

5.1.1 **Active Halton overview**

Following the pandemic community classes increased steadily to 100+ weekly sessions, these include, seven free weekly health walks (4,000 attendances), gentle exercise classes (18,850 attendances) and social sport sessions (10,950).

Attendances at classes are lower than pre pandemic; many older individuals are not attending classes. The Pandemic resulted in people losing confidence and mobility; individuals are being supported through other avenues to try to get them back into activity.

Sports Development received £10,000 grant from Halton Housing to deliver sessions in the Ditton area. The project ran over the summer of 2021 at Frank Myler Pavilion. Sessions for children aged 5 to 11 years included Football, Dance Fitness, Karate and Stage School Fitness. The 12 week project saw attendances of: Football: 153, Dance: 138, Karate: 79, Stage School: 60 at each session. Project did experience some disruption by changes to Covid-19 rules.

£1,820 awarded from Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) to deliver free activities, at Frank Myler Pavilion, for children aged 7 - 11 years in February half term, 47 attended over the 4 days. Activities included archery, speed-stacking football and cricket

skills, participants received a packed lunch each day, provided by the Stadium.

Football Foundation, Active Through Football Project: consortium, across 5 boroughs in the Liverpool City Region, £500,000 grant awarded, to target areas of deprivation and low participation. Football projects aim to improve the wellbeing and opportunities for Halton residents.

Frank Myler Pavilion and Sports Ground

- 5.1.2 Post pandemic, there are 16 indoor community bookings and 9 bookings for the MUGA (including 2 Sport Development sessions) and 29 teams using the pitches on site. Sessions include childrens dance, football and rugby sessions, mature movers and dance/exercise classes for older adults.

All Covid-19 building restrictions ended in March 2022, rebuilding the lost community sessions is underway. Aim to bring more classes to the local community. The way classes delivered and paid for has changed. Support provided to external instructors, some have struggled to restart activity, or their business severely impacted, affecting future delivery.

5.1.3 Halton Sports Coach Scheme

Sports coaching and School support SLA.

The service has now ceased delivering this programme.

Community Sports Coaching

Community Sports Coach started in November 2021 and predominately works evenings, supporting existing activity and creating new opportunities.

Walk fit, Run fit started in January 2022 as a 9-week trial. Running 2 weekly sessions consisting of jogging, walking and exercises, 181 attendances for the pilot project. Plans to run it in the future are underway as there was a lot of positive feedback from the participants.

Community Football sessions for children, ran at the Frank Myler Pavilion and Kingsway Leisure Centre with 142 attendances over 3 month period.

Sessions the community sports coach has supported include Kops and Kids football sessions at Brookvale Recreation Centre, youth groups including Glow and sessions for the refugee resettlement programme.

Casual coaches had to be re-engaged, post pandemic, before coaching in the community could be delivered.

6.0 LEISURE CENTRE SERVICE (LCS) ACTIVITY 2021

- 6.1 The key objective for LCS was to reopen facilities safely, so that residents could continue to take part in activity to improve wellbeing. To do this the LCS encountered many complexities, due to restrictions in place and the demand from residents to use facilities. The service operated a booking only policy for customers to take part in activities, session numbers were reduced by approximately 50%,

and sessions times were reduced to ensure Covid-19 cleaning regime could be maintained. The Active Halton Leisure Centres Team were inspirational throughout this process.

6.1.2 LCS reviewed their annual 2021-22 participation data to understand if key performance indicator (activity visits) is returning to pre-pandemic levels. Annual Participation in 2021-22 was 248,430, compared with 2019-20 annual participation of 424,688 = **58.5% recovery rate**.

6.1.3 **Annual Participation Data – Figure 1** (see below)

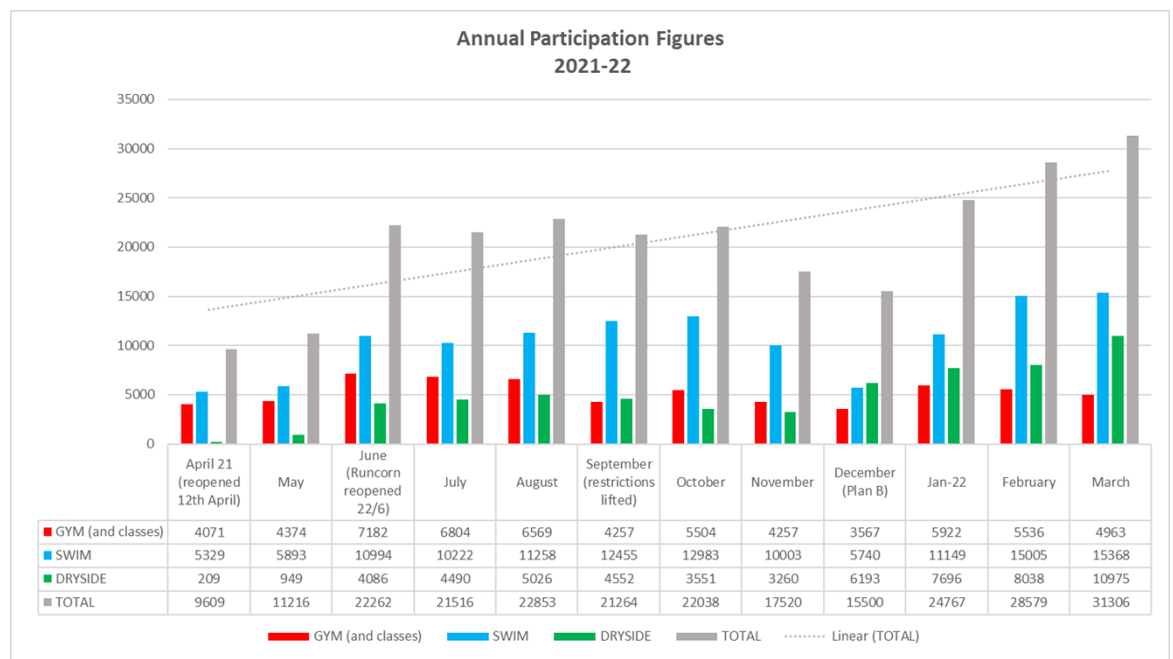
- **248,430** people visited the leisure centres in 2021-2022 for activity purposes.
- Kingsway Leisure Centre and Brookvale Recreation Centre reopened to the public, with restrictions on the 12th April.
- Runcorn Swimming Pool reopened on 22nd June for limited hours, three days per week (22% of pre-covid opening hours)
- Leisure centres remained with restrictions until September 2021.
- 2021-22 Vs 2019-20:
 - Runcorn Swimming Pool was open for 78% more hours in 2019/20. Thus, the service have compared February 2020 Vs February 2022. Kingsway and Brookvale centres data gives the estimated **recovery rate 70%**
- Quarter 4 is showing real signs of continuous improvement.

Annual Fitness Membership Data

- Fitness Memberships in 2021-22 Vs 2019-20 **recovery rate = 88%**

Annual Learn to Swim Data

- Learn to Swim Memberships in 2021-22 Vs 2019-20 **recovery rate= 82%**



6.2 KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM 21/22:

6.2.1 Swimming

6.2.2 Learn to Swim (LTS)

Active Halton 'Learn to Swim' Programme rebranded/ marketed as a single 'product'; a progressive programme/pathway, with defined stages and clear aims/objectives. Aims to develop a visual representation of the aquatics pathway/offer to improve the customer journey and increase customer retention. The aquatics pathway/offer incorporates programmed and unprogrammed sessions, with the aim of increasing participation numbers in swimming. The pathway/offer recognises that different customers have different needs, with each stage being clear and easily recognisable, whilst promoting long term engagement in swimming. The shaping of the programme/pathway is ongoing, with the development of existing services/sessions, alongside the introduction of new sessions. The current pathway/offer:

Programmed: Ducklings (pre-school) > Learn to Swim (stages 1-7) > Swim Academy > Taster Sessions

Unprogrammed: Splash & Play > Family Swim > 8+ Lane Swimming > Lane Swimming > Adult Lane Swimming > U 8's swimming > £1 swim > Holiday Activities

The pathway/offer displayed online (website/social media) and via site marketing materials and/or promotions.

- **Swim England (SE) Expected Standards** – Development of the *Active Halton Expected Standards (AHES)*, in accordance with the SE Expected Standards. Lesson delivery/assessment of outcomes aligned with expectations set out by the NGB, with a focus on the development of the core aquatic skills, fundamental movement skills and the 'building blocks' for learning to swim. Swimming Instructors completed training in April 2021 and November 2021. *AHES* will ensure children/young people continue to progress through the programme, promoting engagement and increasing retention rates.
- **Pool Layout (LTS)** – changes have been made to pool layout to support the delivery of high quality swimming lessons, in accordance with both SE and *AHES*. BRC – x3 teaching stations – dividing rope at the 5m and 10m mark. KLC pool platforms used in the main pool at the 10m mark, to stop children/young people having to climb out of the pool and walk back to the shallow end at the end of each swim. This allows children/young people to have more swim time and is less disruptive to class delivery. Pool layout changes reflect the programme's focus on quality over quantity, including the development of the core aquatics skills and fundamental movement skills.
- **Swim Academy** – children/young people completing stages 8-10 of the aquatic skills framework move into a new class titled 'Swim Academy', a 60-minute session with an increased monthly fee. Swim Academy offers an exit route to children/young people after completing the LTS Framework (stages 1-7) and

therefore increases retention rates and promotes long term engagement in swimming. A single class for stages 8-10 allows for efficient pool programming and the maximisation of resources. The increased monthly fee increases income.

- **Programming/Timetable (LTS)** – pool programming to reflect the ‘pyramid’ model, to facilitate customer retention across the programme. The LTS timetable reflects the needs/demands of the customer, e.g. younger classes at earlier times etc. Maximising pool space with new pool layouts, class timings.
- **Teaching from within the water** – It is now mandatory for Swimming Instructors to teach from within the water when leading duckling/pre-school classes. Teaching from within the water can help a swimming instructor support a child/young person with special educational needs/disabilities, a nervous/anxious swimmer etc. It can also support swimmer progression and support skill development in beginners. This promotes customer retention rates and improves the customer experience.
- **1-2-1/2-2-1 Swimming Lessons** – new policy/booking system created to ensure customer expectations are managed (includes a new series of terms and conditions) and attendance/participation can be recorded.

6.2.3 School Swimming

- **Bookings** – schools have been provided with a new booking form, which includes set session days/times. Bookings are split into 2 x 6 month blocks and each school within Halton is guaranteed at least one session per week over at least one 6 month block. This is to ensure that all pupils within Halton have the opportunity to learn to swim. Booking deadlines introduced.
- **Booking info** – school swimming booking information created for KLC and BRC, which highlights the key information listed within the HBC school swimming guidelines. The document also includes instructions on how to book and further details on pupil: teacher ratios etc.
- **Class Booking Sheets** – class booking sheets available to swimming instructors on poolside, which includes number of pupils, year group and information on special educational needs/disabilities. Risk assessment also provided.
- **Ratios** – ratio for non-swimmers reviewed and implemented across sites. Non-swimmers/beginners limited to 15:1. If a school exceeds this number, the class must be split across a single session. Ratios enforced by Swimming Instructors and Operations Managers.
- **School Staff** – school staff are permitted to support in the water if a child/young person requires additional support (e.g. SEN/medical condition).
- **Session Time** – all school swimming sessions increased to 45 minutes, to provide additional swimming time and a focus on water safety/skills.

- **Training** – swimming instructors completed school swimming training in August 2021. Introduction to the school swimming and water safety charter outcomes. Training/development of class organisation, games led approach, national curriculum requirements, fundamental movement skills etc. There is currently a National Shortage of Swimming Instructors. The service is undertaking a review of the Aquatics service, it plans to introduce a Workforce development programme during 2022, to support and attract people into the industry.

6.2.4 Drowning Prevention Week

Royal Lifesaving Society UK Campaign (19th June – 26th June) – educate children/young people & parent/carers on how to enjoy the water safely. Reduce the number of drownings/accidental deaths. Water safety sessions delivered in all 'Learn to Swim' and School Swimming sessions. Water safety resources and educational messages shared on Active Halton social media platforms. Water Safety information/educational messages displayed at the leisure centres, with free water safety resources available to all.

6.2.5 Sports Works

Swimming Lesson for children with special educational needs/disabilities

Sport Works returned back to the leisure centres on Friday 29th October, 6-8pm.

Sport Works are working in collaboration with Active Halton to provide swimming lessons for children with special educational needs/disabilities. The two-hour session is split into four 30 minute sessions. A maximum of six children in each class and each child will have a 1:1/1:2 in-water assistant. The sessions is led by a SEQ Level 2 Swimming Teacher.

Sport Works were commissioned to deliver this programme (funding from HBC Disabled Children Service), with Active Halton leisure centres, working to design the programme and provide the facilities. Children have access to the 'Alpha Step Awards' (Swim England). The Alpha Step Awards is designed to build confidence in those who may need additional support during their swimming lessons, including those with special educational needs/disabilities.

The Sports Works swimming lessons have been full to capacity since the return.

6.3 PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

6.3.1 Kops N Kids Summer Programme

KOPS 'n' Kids five-week holiday scheme for 8-16-year-olds hosted by Halton's Leisure Centres, working in partnership with Cheshire Police.

'KOPS' stands for Keep on Playing Sport, with the programme well-received following three lockdowns. The programme promotes health and fitness while building relationships with young people and their families.

A range of activities including badminton, basketball, football, indoor athletics, table tennis, highland games, accessible sports, 'glow in the dark' sports and a whole host of other activities with support, coaching and visits from Active Halton, Cheshire Police, Onward Housing, Everton in the Community, St Helens Rugby League Club.

Participation for the programme was 1,087.

6.3.2 **KOPS 'n' Kids 'My Hidden**

Children in Runcorn aged 8-13 were encouraged to sign up to a free programme to help them to understand and improve their mental health.

'My Hidden Chimp' programme was held at the leisure centre in February 2022 half-term.

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire, through his Police Innovation Fund, funded the programme. The fund invites officers, staff and volunteers from Cheshire Constabulary to apply for funding to develop solutions to localised problems, tackle crime, reduce anti-social behaviour or improve outcomes for victims.

The Chimp Model introduces the simplified neuroscience of the brain using fun and engaging activities, which challenge, stimulate and provide valuable learning opportunities for children who take part. Four workshops covered

- The brain - helping children understand its function and celebrate their unique brain
- Taking responsibility – highlighting young people's responsibility for their own actions. Exploring the concept of consequences and making amends
- Managing – introducing the toolbox - exploring what their Chimps need to be in a good place and recognising when they are not
- Managing – using the toolbox – providing helpful strategies which students can use to apply the skills they have learnt and develop management resources to use in the classroom and at home.

40 Children attended the My Hidden Chimp Workshops. All children were provided with a free copy of Professor Steven Peters My Hidden Chimp book to continue in their mental development and understand their emotions and behaviours.

The Centre provided goody bags, with a free Junior Aqua Voucher, for when these sessions start, colouring book and other goodies. A mental health support flyer to support the parents.

7.0 **Sports Facilities**

- 7.1 Leisure centres have invested in new online technology to enable them to offer Online Bookings and Joining to the residents of Halton. Online booking available and online joining at sites (April 2021).

7.2 Planning granted for New Leisure Centre, Moor Lane, Widnes. Two-year construction programme anticipate completion January 2025.

7.3 Refurbishment of Brookvale All Weather Pitch. The Council was granted £303, 284 from the Football Foundation, for the installation and improvement of ancillary facilities, the pitch opened for community Use in February 2022 and the project is due for completion May 2022, with official opening scheduled for July 2022.

8.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Production of the Active Halton strategy was put on hold. Sport England have launched their new strategy and action plans and work will start during 2022 on a Halton strategy.

8.2 The Active Halton steering group have continued to meet throughout the year to work on local delivery plans and projects.

8.3 The benefit gained from being Active or involved in sport contributes towards achieving wider council priorities. Benefits that sport can bring to people and to society: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development. The Sport and Recreation service and the voluntary sector sporting community make a significant contribution to the Public Health agenda.

9.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The service recognises the importance of the right offer for communities to support health inequalities and economic recovery; however, the financial viability is creating the need for strategic exploration.

9.2 Short, medium and long-term impact of the pandemic on the service is unknown. Staff are working hard on recovery and reinvention plans, but will need the opportunity for further customer engagement as and when guidance changes. The medium and long-term positions look very challenging with our facilities predicting a worse financial picture for 2022-23 than pre-lockdown.

9.3 The Leisure Centres require specialist staff to open the buildings to the public, specifically the swimming pool. The service has experienced service delays, due to vacant posts and sickness.

10.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

10.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The service engages with thousands of young people through a variety of coached activities, learn to swim programme, signposting to community sports clubs and activity to support and increase participation. The pandemic significantly affected service delivery.

10.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

Sports Development provides volunteer opportunities and skill development in coaching, administration, fundraising and access to resources for those learning new skills. Support adult and lifelong learning, through fitness referral programmes. Learning has continued with course adaptations. External opportunities have been limited, especially, where practical assessments/demonstration involved contact. Lifeguard training has now resumed, however, there is now a National shortage of Lifeguards and Swimming Instructors. Recruitment has been problematic thus the Aquatics team are looking at a new workforce development model.

10.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Sport and Physical Activity links directly with priorities in Halton's Health and Wellbeing strategy, prevention being the key. Physical activity links with prevention of certain cancers, mental health problems and falls. We need to put the customer first, focus on those least active and transform how activity is provided, this has never been so important. Keeping active has been a focus throughout the pandemic it will continue to be a priority as the Nation moves forward.

10.4 **A Safer Halton**

The connection between sport and reducing anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime supported by key research. Sports activities and competitions, sports volunteering, sports leadership, sports training help develop individuals and communities, encourage healthier and more productive lifestyles and create inclusive communities and neighbourhoods that provide a shared identity and sense of place.

10.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

The service supports groups looking to improve the areas where they live/work.

11.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

11.1 Delivery and income affected by Covid -19.

11.2 Council Leisure Centre stock is old and of poor quality.

12.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

12.1 The Sport and Recreation service is open and accessible. The service supports groups and individuals to be and stay active.

13.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

13.1 None